

School Reform News

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Exclusive
Interview with
CHARLENE K. HAAR
Pages 14-15

DC Schools Chief Blasts Scholarship Program

Says vouchers put children in "inferior Catholic schools"

GEORGE A. CLOWES

Privately funded scholarship programs that give low-income families access to private schools in Washington, DC dupe black mothers into sending their children to "inferior Catholic schools" that are no better than the public school system, the president of the District of Columbia Board of Education charged in a recent Policy Forum hosted by the Cato Institute.

"I will never denigrate a parent's election of where to send their child to school, but I do think ... parents are being fooled," said Peggy Cooper Cafritz on December 10. "The parochial school system in this city has not received the kind of investment from the Catholic Church that's necessary to have sterling schools."

Barbara Mickens, a DC parent in the audience, took exception to Cafritz's statement about poor parents being "bamboozled" since it implied "we're not educated enough or concerned enough to investigate the type of quality education that we want for our children." She recounted how she checked on her daughter's private school in many ways, including making unannounced visits.

"We want quality education for our kids. We've been offered everything but that at public schools," said Mickens. "If our neighborhood schools were up to par, we parents in the District would not be

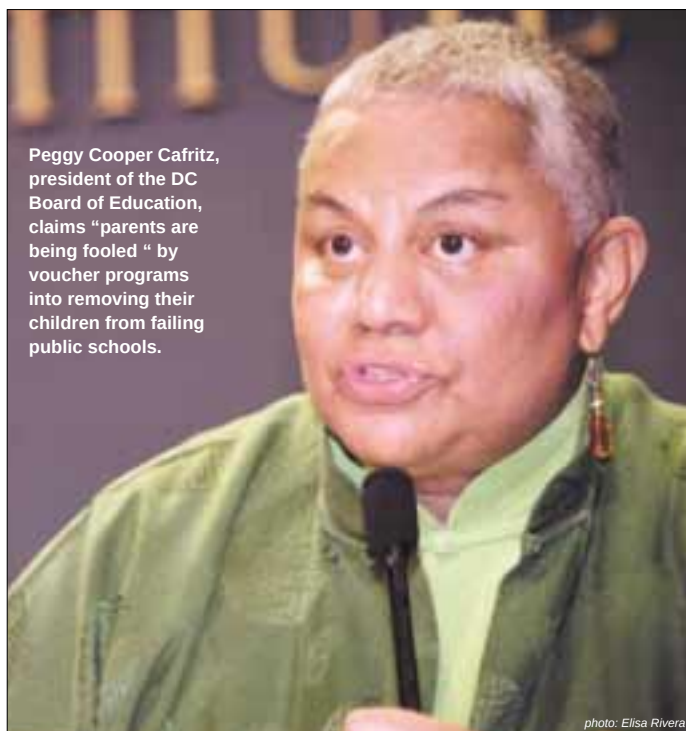
seeking alternatives like private schools or charter schools. Academic excellence is almost unheard of in the majority of public schools."

Cafritz apologized to Mickens after the Forum, saying she hadn't meant any offense. But Mickens told *School Reform News* she was still offended by Cafritz's remarks.

The Forum was convened to coincide with the publication of a new *Cato Policy Study* by analyst Casey J. Lartigue Jr., titled "The Need for Educational Freedom in the Nation's Capital." Also participating in the exchange was panelist Virginia Walden-Ford, a founder and national board member of the Black Alliance for Educational Options and the founder-president of DC Parents for School Choice. Chairing the Forum was David Salisbury, director of Cato's Center for Educational Freedom.

Without specifically naming the program, Cafritz took particular aim at the Children's Scholarship Fund, which offers scholarships to low-income families who otherwise could not afford to pull their children out of public schools they regard as failing their children. Cafritz said "the real private schools that are very good don't want and cannot afford to take the amount of the vouchers" being offered or currently proposed.

DC SCHOOLS continued on page 8



Peggy Cooper Cafritz, president of the DC Board of Education, claims "parents are being fooled" by voucher programs into removing their children from failing public schools.

photo: Elisa Rivera

ALEC Issues Report Card on U.S. Education

Aims to help policymakers chart a better course for the future

KRISTA KAUFER

In October 2002, the American Legislative Exchange Council released its ninth edition of the *Report Card on American Education: A State-by-State Analysis, 1976-2001*.

Written by Andrew T. LeFevre and Rea S. Hederman Jr., the lengthy report includes an analysis of achievement, educational resources, and demographic information for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Using data from the Department of Education's National Center

for Education Statistics and the National Education Association, the authors present more than 100 measures of achievement and resources and more than 115 tables and figures.

Achievement Matters

In terms of academic achievement, the *Report Card* ranks Wisconsin, Washington, Minnesota, and Iowa as the top four states or jurisdictions, with New Mexico, Mississippi, the District of Columbia, and Louisiana making up the bottom four.

Of the top 10 states with the highest percentage increase in per-pupil expenditures over the past 20 years, not one also appeared in the top 10 for academic achievement. Similarly, no state that appeared in the top 10 for decreases in pupil-to-teacher ratio also appeared in the top 10 for academic achievement. Such data, according to the report, strengthen "the growing consensus that simply increasing spending on education is not

ALEC continued on page 13

"Bounty" Funding Pushes More Kids into Special Education

Study suggests solution could be McKay-type vouchers

GEORGE A. CLOWES

Does the prospect of getting more money—a "bounty"—for each extra special education student persuade some educators to identify more children as disabled? Apparently so, according to a new study from the Manhattan

Institute, which finds states with "bounty" systems for special education have significantly higher growth rates for special education enrollment than states with no such incentives.

The timely report comes as Congress prepares to reform and reauthorize the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and its policy implications were quickly noted by U.S. Rep. John

SPECIAL continued on page 6

INSIDE SRN

- 3 Rees Takes Helm at OII
- 5 Producing a Proficient Student
- 9 Book Review: *Class Warfare*
- 10 The Friedman Report
- 13 Va. Launches Choice Initiatives
- 17 Voucher and Tax Credit Programs

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CAPITOL HILL BEAT

Rees Takes Helm at Office of Innovation and Improvement

Draft guidance details choice provisions of NCLB

DON SOIFER

"If Washington insists on investing in the nation's schools, then it is fair for taxpayers to expect their dollars to yield a positive return."

That was what Nina Shokrai Rees suggested in 1999 as part of her critique of a major Clinton administration education proposal. At the time, Rees was senior education analyst for The Heritage Foundation and a contributing editor to *School Reform News*.

Widely regarded as one of the brightest minds of the school reform movement, Rees gets the opportunity to turn her words into action as she takes on her new role as Deputy Undersecretary of Education for the Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII).

The office, which opened for business in December, will have a program budget of \$2 billion and a full-time staff of approximately 100. Its budget includes some two dozen competitive grant programs, ranging from charter schools to dropout prevention. Education Secretary Rod Paige described the role of the new office as one of "leveraging competitive grant programs for maximum learning and maximum impact ... and working with the Office of Educational Research and Improvement to rigorously evaluate their results."

Among OII's responsibilities will be to coordinate the public school choice and supplemental education services provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act, working with the Department's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

"Our programs are here to help," Rees explained, "whether through an effective Arts Education program that integrates arts into teaching math, or a technology tool that will make it easier for children in a rural district to access quality education, or through alternative teacher certification."

Rees brings to OII a diverse leadership team that includes:

- Associate Deputy Undersecretary Michael Petrilli, who was previously involved in Paige's strategic planning for the department and served as program director of the Fordham Foundation;
- Senior Advisor Lori Yaklin, who ran the Michigan School Board Leaders Association after helping get it started; and,
- Outreach and Planning Coordinator Becky Davis Fleischer, who hails from the White House Office of Management and Budget after serving at the Indianapolis-based GEO Foundation.

OII also houses the Department's Public Charter Schools program, whose new director, Dean Kern, comes to Washington with 20 years of education experience, including as a charter school principal and senior charter school consultant for the Colorado Department of Education. Among the grants Kern will oversee will be a program specifically targeted toward helping charter schools secure safe and functional facilities.

Rees, who comes to her position following a stint

as domestic policy advisor to Vice President Dick Cheney, remains mindful of the concerns she had expressed before joining the administration. When asked how she plans to assure her program yields taxpayers their positive return, she cited the implementation of new program goals that will be used to measure the success of each program. By continuing to develop stronger internal evaluations, she added, "our office is going to measure the progress of each grant in terms of its value added to raising school achievement or boosting teacher quality."

Grant competitions began in late January 2003 and are announced on the office's Web site at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OII>.

Guide to School Choice Provisions of NCLB
The federal Department of Education on December 4 released its draft guidance on the school choice provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act.

While most observers found no surprises in the 28-page document, the publication will be valuable to parents in providing them with a concise yet comprehensive overview of their options and the obligations of school officials under No Child Left Behind.

A main focus of the draft guidance is to make clear the responsibilities of officials at chronically failing schools to offer to transfer students to bet-



ter public schools. According to the law, all students in a designated school must have the opportunity to transfer, with priority given to the lowest-achieving children from low-income families.

Public school choice must also be offered to students whose schools have been identified as persistently dangerous, or when a child has been the victim of a violent crime on school property.

"An LEA [local educational agency] may not use lack of capacity to deny students the option to transfer," the guidance document states, noting that if an LEA does not have the capacity to accommodate the demand for student transfers, then "the LEA must create additional capacity or provide choices of other schools."

The guidance also addresses the details about how and when schools must offer to make supplemental services portable so students can elect to purchase those services from nonpublic providers.

The draft guidance is available on the Department's Web site at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SASA/schoolchoiceguid.pdf>.

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Glad You Asked!

A. General Information

- A-1.** What is the purpose of the public school choice requirement in No Child Left Behind?
- A-2.** Which schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) are required to offer public school choice?
- A-3.** What are the characteristics parents should look for in the schools they are considering for their child?
- A-4.** What are the key components of a quality public school choice plan?
- A-5.** Can an existing choice program, such as an open enrollment program, be modified to include the Title I public school choice requirement?
- A-6.** What other educational choice options are available to students and parents under the Act?
- A-7.** Does the State have any reporting requirements regarding public school choice?

D. Notification of Parents

- D-1.** When should parents be notified that their children are eligible for public school choice?
- D-2.** How must an LEA notify parents that their children are eligible for public school choice?
- D-3.** How can the public school choice program improve community and parent relations with the school district?
- D-4.** What should parents be advised to look for when they are given the option of school choice?
- D-5.** How much time should parents have to consider their options?
- D-6.** How can parents communicate their choice of school?
- D-7.** If there are no schools to which students can transfer because (1) all schools at a grade level are in school improvement; (2) there is only one school in the district; or (3) transportation to an eligible school is not feasible; must parents still be notified?

B. Timing and Duration of Choices

- B-1.** In which schools is an LEA required to offer public school choice?
- B-2.** When must an LEA make public school choice available to eligible students?
- B-3.** How should year-round schools meet the requirement to offer school choice by the beginning of the school year?
- B-4.** What is the responsibility of a state educational agency (SEA) to ensure that public school choice is available at the start of a new school year?
- B-5.** Is an SEA required to identify a school for improvement if it does not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for the second consecutive year based on its 2001-02 assessment results?
- B-6.** How long must an LEA continue to offer students in eligible Title I schools the option to attend another public school?
- B-7.** How long must students be allowed to attend the school of their choice?
- B-8.** What if the assessment data from the 2001-2002 school year are not received until after the start of the 2002-2003 school year?
- B-9.** What can an LEA do to plan for public school choice even before assessment results are available?

C. Eligible Students

- C-1.** Who is eligible to participate in public school choice under NCLB?
- C-2.** Which Title I schools must provide their students with public school choice?
- C-3.** What does the law mean when it says the LEA shall "give priority to the lowest achieving children from low-income families?"
- C-4.** How does an LEA determine "priority?"
- C-5.** What if a particular student attends a school that has been identified for improvement, but has been assigned to that school by a court order or for disciplinary reasons?

Department of Education answers questions about NCLB school choice provisions

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) gives parents options for transferring their children out of schools needing improvement to better-performing public schools. On December 4, the U.S. Department of Education issued guidance on these school choice provisions.

The guidance comes in the form of a 28-page document that provides answers to a series of ques-

tions about implementation, eligibility, communication with parents, and the types of schools involved. Issues concerning special education, desegregation plans, and transportation funding also are covered. According to the Department, "States may rely on this guidance in administering these [school choice] requirements."

The questions addressed in the document are provided below. The answers may be viewed by accessing the publication, *Public School Choice: Draft Non-Regulatory Guidance*, at the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SASA/schoolchoiceguid.pdf>.

E. Schools of Choice

- E-1.** Which schools must be offered to students as transfer options?
- E-2.** Are any public schools not available for parents and students who wish to transfer?
- E-3.** How many choices of schools is an LEA required to offer to students?
- E-4.** May specialty schools be offered to students as transfer options?
- E-5.** Is an LEA permitted to limit the choices available to students?
- E-6.** How is the final decision made in selecting the school to which students will transfer?
- E-7.** What if schools do not have the physical capacity to accept transferring students?
- E-8.** What if State or local laws have the effect of limiting choice?
- E-9.** What if existing local transfer policies prohibit school choice?
- E-10.** What if choice might create health or safety problems?
- E-11.** May an LEA provide eligible students with an option to transfer to schools outside of the district?
- E-12.** What if providing the option to transfer to another public school is not possible?

I. State and Federal Law and School Choice

- I-1.** What does the state law prohibition against school choice mean?
- I-2.** What if a State has an open enrollment policy?
- I-3.** How do Federal civil rights laws apply to LEAs implementing public school choice?

K. Transportation Funding Issues

- K-1.** Is an LEA required to provide transportation to schools of choice?
- K-2.** What funds can be used by an LEA to pay for choice-related transportation?
- K-3.** How much must an LEA pay to provide choice-related transportation?
- K-4.** What must an LEA do if funds are not sufficient to provide transportation to all students wishing to transfer?
- K-5.** Must an LEA reserve a portion of its Title I allocation to pay for choice-related transportation?
- K-6.** What other Federal program dollars may be used to pay for choice-related transportation?
- K-7.** Is an LEA required to pay for transportation for students who have left a school in improvement prior to the enactment of No Child Left Behind?
- K-8.** If an LEA does not already directly provide for transportation to and from school, must the district provide transportation for students choosing to transfer under these provisions?
- K-9.** May LEAs establish transportation zones within an LEA based on geographic location of schools?
- K-10.** Does the Title I "supplement, not supplant" requirement apply to transportation funds?

F. Special Education and Choice

- F-1.** What are the responsibilities of the school that receives transfer students with disabilities?
- F-2.** Must students with disabilities be offered their choice of the same schools as nondisabled students?
- F-3.** Does the movement of a student with disabilities to a school of choice constitute a "change of placement" under the IDEA?

G. Desegregation Issues

- G-1.** Must an LEA provide the option to transfer if the LEA is complying with a desegregation plan?
- G-2.** What if the desegregation plan is a court-ordered plan?
- G-3.** If an LEA has to go back to court to amend its desegregation plan, can it use Title I funds to pay the associated legal costs?

H. Responsibilities of Schools Receiving Transfer Students

- H-1.** What are the responsibilities of a school that receives transfer students under this program?
- H-2.** May districts prohibit students transferring from a school identified for improvement the opportunity to play sports in their new school?

J. General Funding Issues

- J-1.** Are there any requirements as to how general educational services for transfer students are funded by the LEA?
- J-2.** What Federal funds are available to pay for transportation?
- J-3.** If a child transfers out of her or his original school, should an LEA include that child (1) in the count of children used to determine the Title I allocation to the school of residence; or (2) in the count used to determine the Title I allocation to the school of enrollment?
- J-4.** May Title I funds be used to benefit non-Title I schools that receive students transferring from Title I schools identified for improvement?
- J-5.** Does special education funding follow a child with disabilities to the school of his or her choice?

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COST PER PROFICIENT FOURTH-GRADE READER

State	NAEP Student Achievement: % scoring at or above proficient in Grade 4 Reading (1998)	% Annual Current Expenditure Per Pupil (1997-98)	\$ Cost to Produce a Proficient Fourth-Grader in 1998 (\$ x 5) / %
United States	29	\$6,189	\$107,000
Alabama	24	\$4,849	\$101,000
Alaska	-	\$8,271	-
Arizona	22	\$4,595	\$104,000
Arkansas	23	\$4,708	\$102,000
California	20	\$5,644	\$141,000
Colorado	34	\$5,656	\$83,200
Connecticut	46	\$8,901	\$96,800
Delaware	25	\$7,420	\$148,000
Florida	23	\$5,552	\$121,000
Georgia	24	\$5,647	\$118,000
Hawaii	17	\$5,858	\$172,000
Idaho	-	\$4,721	-
Illinois	-	\$6,242	-
Indiana	-	\$6,318	-
Iowa	35	\$5,998	\$85,700
Kansas	34	\$5,727	\$84,200
Kentucky	29	\$5,213	\$89,900
Louisiana	19	\$5,187	\$136,000
Maine	36	\$6,742	\$93,600
Maryland	29	\$7,034	\$121,000
Massachusetts	37	\$7,778	\$105,000
Michigan	28	\$7,050	\$126,000
Minnesota	36	\$6,388	\$88,700
Mississippi	18	\$4,288	\$119,000
Missouri	29	\$5,565	\$96,000
Montana	37	\$5,724	\$77,400
Nebraska	-	\$5,958	-
Nevada	21	\$5,295	\$126,000
New Hampshire	38	\$6,156	\$81,000
New Jersey	-	\$9,643	-
New Mexico	22	\$5,005	\$114,000
New York	29	\$8,852	\$153,000
North Carolina	28	\$5,257	\$93,900
North Dakota	-	\$5,056	-
Ohio	-	\$6,198	-
Oklahoma	30	\$5,033	\$83,900
Oregon	28	\$6,419	\$115,000
Pennsylvania	-	\$7,209	-
Rhode Island	32	\$7,928	\$124,000
South Carolina	22	\$5,320	\$121,000
South Dakota	-	\$4,669	-
Tennessee	25	\$4,937	\$98,700
Texas	29	\$5,444	\$93,900
Utah	28	\$3,969	\$70,900
Vermont	-	\$7,075	-
Virginia	30	\$6,065	\$101,000
Washington	29	\$6,040	\$104,000
West Virginia	29	\$6,323	\$109,000
Wisconsin	34	\$7,123	\$105,000
Wyoming	30	\$6,218	\$104,000
District of Columbia	10	\$8,393	\$420,000

NAEP data are published by the National Center for Education Statistics at the U.S. Department of Education, located at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>.

Current expenditures per pupil are derived from data in the report, Early Estimates of Public Elementary and Secondary Education Statistics: School Year 2001-2002, published in April 2002 by the National Center for Education Statistics. The report is available from the NCES Web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002311.pdf>.

Note: The states with incomplete data did not participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress survey.

The Cost of Producing a Proficient Student

HERBERT J. WALBERG

Fourth grade marks the point that proficient students stop learning to read, and start reading to learn. A federal achievement survey performed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) estimates that in 1998 only 29 percent of fourth graders attained such proficiency. Lack of reading skills reduces students' chances of thriving academically and graduating from high school.

Failure cannot be blamed on low spending. State-level per-student expenditures ranged from \$3,969 in Utah to \$9,643 in New Jersey. Taxpayers could reasonably expect that such investments would produce academically proficient fourth graders, whom the NAEP defines as demonstrating "solid academic performance" and being well prepared for fifth-grade work.

U.S. taxpayers spent an average of \$107,000 to produce a proficient fourth-grade reader in 1998, the latest year for which data are available.

Doing the Math

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the annual per-student cost of K-12 public education was \$6,189 for the 1997-98 school year. Thus, by fourth grade, the cumulative U.S. taxpayer investment in a child's public education is five years at roughly \$6,189 a year, or \$30,945.

Given that the expenditure of \$30,945 per pupil produced only 29 proficient readers out of every 100, the cost per proficient fourth-grade reader is \$30,945 divided by 29 percent, or about \$107,000. This calculation provides a cost index of how productively each state is using its tax dollars to produce proficient fourth-grade readers.

The three states with the highest costs per proficient fourth-grade reader are Hawaii (\$172,000), with just 17 percent of Aloha State students reading at a proficient level; New York (\$153,000), with 29 percent; and Delaware (\$148,000), with 25 percent. New York and Delaware deliver only mediocre reading proficiency despite being among the top six states in the nation in per-pupil spending. The highest cost by far was in the District of Columbia, where the cost of producing a proficient fourth-grade reader was \$420,000—six times higher than in Utah.

The three states with the lowest

cost per proficient fourth-grade reader are Utah (\$70,900), with 28 percent of Beehive State students reading at proficient or above; Montana (\$77,400), with 37 percent; and New Hampshire (\$81,000), with 38 percent. Montana and New Hampshire achieve substantially higher than average proficiency rates at lower than average costs.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires annual testing of all third through eighth graders. It will allow more timely comparisons not only of states but also of school districts and even schools. In addition to calculating cost per proficient reader, it would be interesting to calculate the costs of proficient algebraists by eighth grade and by high school graduation.

The cost per proficient student provides a usefully compact index to track the efficiency of

schools because it combines effectiveness with cost, both of which are important to taxpayers who want to know the value of what their tax monies buy. Furthermore, taxpayers ought to be able to compare one school, school district, or state with another ... and to ask legislators and educators for an explanation of the comparative standings.

"[T]axpayers ought to be able to compare one school, school district, or state with another ... and to ask legislators and educators for an explanation of the comparative standings."

Herbert J. Walberg, chairman of The Heartland Institute, is a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution; a member of Hoover's Koret Task Force on K-12 Education; and University Scholar and research professor emeritus of education and psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. This material was first published as a Hoover Institute Weekly Essay on December 23, 2002. Copyright of the Trustees of Leland Stanford.



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SPECIAL continued from page 1

Boehner (R-Ohio), chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, and Rep. Mike Castle (R-Delaware), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Education Reform.

"As this report suggests, many states have not updated their funding systems and appear to include built-in incentives for school districts to over-identify students for special education services," the Congressmen said in a joint statement. "And since there is not an endless supply of resources, the ultimate effect of this system may be that less money is available per student for those children in need of special help."

This is "a cause for concern," they concluded, and "an issue Congress is compelled to consider."

Growing Enrollment

Although special education enrollment had been increasing steadily prior to 1990, the growth rate accelerated in the following decade, lifting enrollment from 10.6 percent of all U.S. students in school year 1991-92 to 12.3 percent in 2000-01. With no sign the acceleration is abating, and with demands for increased special education funding, policymakers want to understand what is driving the enrollment increase.

Several explanations have been suggested, note the authors of the study, Jay P. Greene and Greg Forster, both with the Manhattan Institute's Education Research Office. Greene's studies of school choice were cited four times in the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on the Cleveland voucher program last June.

These explanations for the enrollment increases may be reduced to two:

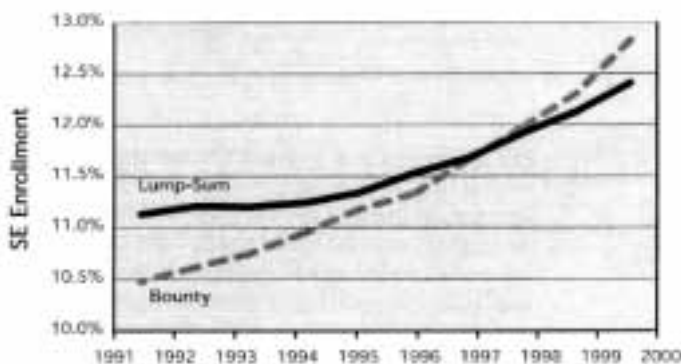
- There really are more disabled children; or,
- Schools are taking children without special needs and diagnosing them as disabled in response to financial or other incentives.

In their December 2002 report, "Effects of Funding Incentives on Special Education Enrollment," Greene and Forster quickly dispose of the first explanation, noting that for 25 years there has been little change in the incidence of disabilities that can be diagnosed objectively.

But some critics of high-stakes testing have suggested this accountability mechanism could function as a perverse incentive to increase special education enrollment. When schools are held accountable for their students' test scores, they argue, educators might have an incentive to place lower-scoring students in special education in order to remove them from the testing pool.

The Manhattan Institute study finds no evidence educators are succumbing to this temptation. An analysis of state-by-state growth rates of special education enrollment shows the effect of high-stakes testing on enrollment to be statistically insignificant.

Average Special Education Enrollment in Lump-Sum and Bounty States, 1991-2000



Private Schools Don't Skim the Best Disabled Students

Despite several studies demonstrating such claims to be false, critics of school vouchers continue to claim private schools would skim the best students from public schools, leaving public schools to handle all the difficult-to-educate students.

Similar criticism is now being directed at Florida's McKay Scholarship Program, which provides private school scholarships to disabled children. The program's critics claim private schools will take only students with relatively mild disabilities, leaving public schools the severely disabled children.

The Manhattan Institute's new Education Research Office, located in Davie, Florida,

recently posted data on its Web site, www.miedresearchoffice.org, that refutes this claim.

According to the data, the types of disabilities found in the population of students using McKay scholarships roughly mirror those found in the population of all disabled students in Florida. For example, 7.7 percent of the McKay students in the current school year are classified as "educable mentally handicapped," compared to 7.9 percent of all Florida disabled students in the prior school year, the most recent for which data are available. Autistic students make up 2.2 percent of McKay students, compared to 1.4 percent of all Florida disabled students.

Funding Incentives

Money, however, does appear to be an incentive for increasing special education populations. The study finds the financial incentives built into special education funding represent the biggest driver for the increase in special education enrollment, an analysis made possible since states fund special education in two different ways.

The funding system used in most states pays school districts more for each additional student diagnosed with a disability—what some education officials decry as a "bounty" system. This provides schools with a perverse incentive to diagnose more disabled children. By contrast, 16 states have funding systems that allocate a lump sum for special education. This provides schools

with no incentive to diagnose additional disabled students.

When Green and Forster compared the 1990s special education growth rates in states with and without the bounty funding system, they found:

- Total special education enrollment under lump-sum funding systems grew from 10.5 percent to 11.5 percent, an increase of 1.0 percentage points over the 10-year period;
- Total special education enrollment under bounty funding systems grew from 10.6 percent to 12.6 percent, an increase of 2.0 percentage points.

Further analysis showed 62 percent of the increase in special education enrollment in bounty states is attributable to the financial incentives.

For more information...

WWW The December 2002 Manhattan Institute report by Jay P. Greene and Greg Forster, "Effects of Funding Incentives on Special Education Enrollment," Civic Report No. 32, is available from the Institute's Web site at www.manhattaninstitute.org/cr_32.pdf.

Complete breakdowns of the disabilities found in McKay and Florida student populations is available at the Web site of the Manhattan Institute's Education Research Office at www.miedresearchoffice.org/mckayscholarship.htm#_Types_of_disabilities.

That represents approximately 390,000 extra students classified as disabled because of financial incentives, resulting in additional spending of more than \$2.3 billion per year.

"If it is financially advantageous to move students into special education, school systems will seek to influence the rate at which students are diagnosed," they continue. "It is no coincidence that the overwhelming majority of the growth in special education has taken place in the specific learning disability category, which is both among the most subjective disabilities to diagnose and among the cheapest to serve."

Implications for Policymakers

The report's authors offer several responses to policymakers as possible solutions to the problem of perverse incentives:

- For states currently using the bounty system states, adopt lump-sum funding systems for special education.
- Provide private school scholarships to all special education students, based on Florida's McKay Scholarship Program.
- Make federal IDEA funding portable so parents could seek third-party services while their children stay in public school for regular classes.
- Initiate federal auditing of special education placements, particularly in districts with especially high or low enrollment rates.
- Restructure IDEA spending priorities to give higher financial priority to disabilities that have more clearly objective diagnostic standards.

"Dr. Greene's report underscores the need for Congress to focus not simply on pumping money into the special education system, but also on how this money is used on behalf of children with special needs," said Congressmen Boehner and Castle. "Results, not just funding, must be our focus in renewing the IDEA."

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News.

Summer Institute Offered for High School Teachers

For the past two summers, the Bill of Rights Institute has conducted a week-long professional development course on the Bill of Rights for high school teachers of U.S. history and government. The Institute is now accepting applications for its Third Annual Summer Institute for High School Teachers.

The intensive 45-hour course will be held July 13-19, 2003 at George Mason University School of Law in Arlington, Virginia, just across the Potomac from the nation's capital. Tuition is \$300 and includes instruction, most meals, hotel accommodations, field trips, a reading resource book, and a 200-page

teacher's guide and 10-part video set.

The actual cost of the program is more than \$2,000 per teacher, but the Institute is able to offer it for substantially less due to contributions made by more than 2,800 individuals and foundations to the Institute, a national nonprofit, education organization.

For more information...

WWW Further information, including application forms, is available at the Bill of Rights Institute's Web site at www.BillOfRightsInstitute.org/redirect.php?id=187.

Keeping Track of Advocacy Groups in Education

GEORGE A. CLOWES

Since K-12 education is not only one of the most important sectors in the U.S. economy, but also the second largest after health care—and growing at twice the rate of inflation—it's not surprising the industry attracts a large number of political advocacy groups with educational interests ranging from pedagogy and curriculum to vouchers and class size. In fact, according to the Capital Research Center (CRC), there are more than 200 such groups active in the reform debate.

To keep track of those advocacy groups, CRC has established an online information resource called www.EducationWatch.org, which identifies the nonprofit policy and advocacy groups involved in the debate over public education reform, describes their activities, and locates their sources of funding. At the heart of this resource is a searchable online database where users can identify the people, ideas, and money being deployed to affect education policy.

For more information...

WWW Visit EducationWatch at <http://www.educationwatch.org>.

Patrick J. Reilly's October 2002 report for the Capital Research Center, "People for the American Way: The Campaign to Control America's Vote," is available from CRC's Web site at <http://www.capitalresearch.org/pubs/pdf/x3759749060.pdf>.

Morgan Bergman's December 2002 report, "Americans United for Separation of Church and State: Barry Lynn Spearheads Campaign to Defeat School Choice," is available from CRC's Web site at <http://www.capitalresearch.org/pubs/pdf/x3759952117.pdf>.

EducationWatch also provides reports and analysis of education groups in the news. For example, in October 2002, CRC published a report on People for the American Way (PFAW), a well-financed group at the forefront of efforts to thwart education reforms that would give children and parents more choice in schooling. Promoting a policy agenda "that almost always coincides with Democratic Party interests," PFAW is "one of the most radical political organizations of the Left," according to report author Patrick J. Reilly.

"PFAW's tax-exempt and 'non-partisan' educational foundation also supports Democratic candidates by registering and motivating voters drawn from traditional Democratic constituencies," noted Reilly. For example, PFAW's African American Ministers Leadership Council targets black churches to "get all the souls to the polls."

In apparent contrast, another anti-voucher advocacy group vigorously attacks church involvement in political activities, according to a December 2002 CRC report by Morgan

Bergman on Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. However, these attacks have not been on the political activities of churches in traditional Democratic constituencies, but instead have focused on constituencies with conservative views, including the so-called "Religious Right."

EducationWatch is one of several "watch-dog" projects of the Capital Research Center. Founded in 1984, CRC is a Washington, DC-

based think tank that conducts research on charity, philanthropy, and the nonprofit sector. In particular, CRC focuses on nonprofit political advocacy organizations that seek influence over public policy. CRC publications alert donors, policymakers, and the news media about the leadership, activities, and funding of these organizations. George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News.

"[I]t's not surprising the [education] industry attracts a large number of political advocacy groups ... In fact, according to the Capital Research Center (CRC), there are more than 200 such groups active in the reform debate."

Hillsdale College Announces the Seventh Recipient of the \$25,000 Henry Salvatori Prize For "Excellence in Teaching"

Each fall, Hillsdale College seeks nominations for the Henry Salvatori Prize for "Excellence in Teaching." This prize honors teachers in grades K-12 who are committed to rigorous standards and to a traditional, time-tested approach to education. Endowed by the late businessman and philanthropist Henry Salvatori, this competition is open to teachers in non-profit private and public schools who have employed the *Hillsdale Academy Reference Guide*. Winners receive a \$25,000 cash award payable to their school.

Mr. Micah Porter, of D'Evelyn Junior/Senior High School in Denver, Colorado, is hereby named the recipient of the 2002 Henry Salvatori Prize for "Excellence in Teaching."



The *Hillsdale Academy Reference Guide* is an invaluable resource for teachers, administrators and parents who seek to educate their children in a well-balanced core of essential subjects. Based on the daily operation of Hillsdale Academy, the K-12 model school of Hillsdale College, the *Guide* contains information on curricula, supplementary reading, school culture, and parent and faculty handbooks. It is already in use at over 400 schools in all 50 states nationwide, as well as by countless home-schooling parents.

To learn more about the Henry Salvatori Prize for "Excellence in Teaching" or the *Hillsdale Academy Reference Guide*, call 1-800-989-7323 or log on to www.hillsdale.edu/academy.



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DC SCHOOLS continued from page 1

"When you look at where the children who have gone to schools through Teddy Forstmann's and John Walton's program, they have gone primarily to inferior Catholic schools and Christian academies whose scores are no better than the District of Columbia public school system," she stated.

Ford, who used a scholarship to educate one of her children, countered that the bottom line is what works for the child and for the parents to find a school that best meets the child's needs. All parents want is for the public schools to educate their children, she said, but after years of being told things would be better "this time next year," she questioned just how long they would have to wait before the DC school system turned around.

"You have no idea what it's like to be stuck in a school that's performing badly," Ford said. After trying the public schools, she realized she had to do something: "I had to save my child."

Cafritz granted that what Ford said was "very nice," but said "we cannot make public policy decisions based on anecdotes."

Salisbury had introduced the three panelists—Lartigue, Cafritz, and Ford—with the observation that disagreements about the DC public schools arise not so much over the existence of serious problems in the system as over what solutions are appropriate. However, the Forum audience heard little agreement even over the District's problems as Cafritz muted her earlier criticism of the DC school system and vigorously defended its current efforts at improvement.

Congress Is Responsible for DC

While Members of Congress may pass laws to hold states accountable for the performance of

their individual public education systems, the U.S. Constitution holds Members of Congress responsible for the District of Columbia, including its public education system. Article I, Section VIII of the U.S. Constitution gives Congress the authority to "exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever, over such District." When the District's public school system was created in 1804, then-President Thomas Jefferson was named school board president.

As Lartigue's study carefully documents, the District's school system has been troubled with student achievement problems for much of the last century, long before the mid-century "white flight" occurred. For example, in 1939, the superintendent of DC schools decried "illiterates" in the District's white schools. The superintendent in 1947 said Washington, DC had "one of the sorriest school systems in the country."

The latest data from the District signal no change for the better, despite per-student spending levels that are among the highest in the country. For example:

- In 2001, DC public school students averaged 798 on the SAT, compared to the national average of 1020 and a DC private school average of 1200;
- In 2001, 70 percent of tenth- and eleventh-graders performed math at the "Below Basic" level on the Stanford 9 achievement test, demonstrating little or no mastery of fundamental skills at their grade level.

A month after taking office in January 2001 and visiting schools in the District, Cafritz labeled half of the system's teachers unqualified or incompetent, a statement she later modified to apply only to high school teachers. She also said all of the District's high schools "are generally lousy," except for four she named. Her superintendent at the time

admitted the teachers the District hired "are teachers who could not get jobs anywhere else."

In an attempt to spur some changes in the District by means of competition, Congress in 1998 passed a small voucher plan, where up to 2,000 low-income students would be offered tuition subsidies of up to \$3,200 to attend a public, private, or religious school of their choice. The bill was vetoed by then-President Bill Clinton. In April 2001, Senator John McCain (R-Arizona) proposed another limited voucher bill, but he withdrew it after hearing criticism from District officials and activist groups.

Lartigue's analysis concludes that policy prescriptions for the DC public school system "must consider options beyond spending more money" and include competition for customers between public and private schools in order to spur improvements in quality. His proposals include vouchers of about \$5,000 for students from low-income families; expanding the idea of the G.I. Bill to K-12; contracting out the management of failing schools; and tax credits for individuals sponsoring the education of a child.

Cafritz responded by saying she "would love to have a serious debate" but called Lartigue's research "weak," his proposals "silly bromides," his ideas "cockamamie," and his conclusions "slick lies in pursuit of a political agenda." When challenged to identify just one example of a "slick lie" in the report, Cafritz pointed to its first sentence: "The public school system in the nation's capital is failing."

"That's not true," she asserted, saying that "any study of the real statistics" for the last two years would show the system "is turning around," with "no corruption," and with the crumbling infrastructure "halted" and "being

For more information...

WWW Cato Policy Analysis No. 461, "The Need for Educational Freedom in the Nation's Capital," by Casey J. Lartigue, Jr., issued on December 10, 2002, is available through PolicyBot. Point your Web browser to <http://www.heartland.org>, click on the PolicyBot icon, and search for document #11450.

Real Video coverage of the December 10, 2002 Policy Forum at the Cato Institute is available from Cato's Web site at <http://www.cato.org/realaudio/cpf-12-10-02.ram>.

Real Audio coverage is available at <http://www.cato.org/realaudio/cpa-12-10-02.ram>.

fixed." While admitting there had been "a tremendous deterioration of the system over the years," she said "we are radically transforming the system."

The District's scores are improving, they're improving faster, and they're improving in a more systemic way, she told the Forum audience. "Give us a chance," she asked.

Ford was unconvinced. Improvements in the District are always "next year, next year," she said. She also was unimpressed by the District's excitement about having more children now getting to the "Basic" level.

"When did 'Basic' become OK for our kids to get?" she asked.

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News.

Visualize School Choice

Two Essential Books on School Reform



School Choices True and False

BY JOHN MERRIFIELD
Professor of Economics, University of Texas at San Antonio

The school choice movement has gained momentum in recent years, but today's programs are nothing like the "free market in education" proposed by the early advocates of school choice.

Economist John Merrifield shows that the school choice movement has become mired in false alternatives, and diminished vision. Yet, he argues that school choice must not be allowed to fail like so many other government programs—a freely competitive market for education must remain the ultimate goal. **School Choices: True and False** charts a clear course for the achievement of this goal.

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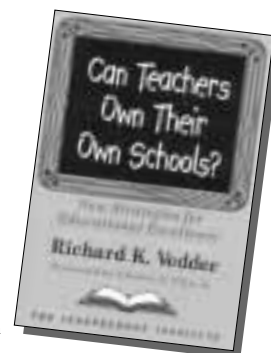
BY RICHARD K. VEDDER
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FOREWORD BY CHESTER E. FINN, JR.

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Suburban Schools Offer No Sanctuary from Dumbing-Down Regime

BOOK REVIEW BY KEVIN KILLION

Class Warfare: Besieged Schools, Bewildered Parents, Betrayed Kids and the Attack on Excellence



by J. Martin Rochester
Encounter Books, November 2002
328 pages cloth

There have been many rich and important books on curriculum and pedagogy targeted to leaders and policymakers, notably Diane Ravitch's *Left Back* and E. D. Hirsch's *The Schools We Need*.

For parents and for John Q. Public serving on a school board, books such as Elaine McEwan's *Angry Parents, Failing Schools* or Charles Sykes' *Dumbing Down Our Kids* do a first-class job documenting the damage being done in today's classrooms.

Even with the ready availability of such powerful books, it's been all too easy for readers to convince themselves the educational problems their authors describe affect only schools in the inner cities, not private schools or public schools in the suburbs. In a new book, J. Martin Rochester shatters that illusion.

We're talking about your school, too, says Rochester, and no amount of tinkering with the details of an individual school is going to resolve the core problem, which is the education establishment's ongoing attack on educational excellence. That is the resounding message of Rochester's breakthrough book: *Class Warfare: Besieged Schools, Bewildered Parents, Betrayed Kids and the Attack on Excellence*. The education

battleground has been brought to the doorstep of suburban America.

A Concerned Parent Speaks Out

Rochester is a distinguished professor of political science at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and the author of several books on international poli-

"[R]igor and merit are now considered four-letter words, for fear of stifling personal creativity or favoring one student over another."

J. MARTIN ROCHESTER
CLASS WARFARE

tics. He sees the end-products of K-12 schooling in his classes and has participated in programs for teachers in training.

But it was as a concerned parent that Rochester became increasingly involved in public education as his children progressed through their K-12 schooling. He moved among suburbs in search of

academic excellence, yet wound up attending hundreds of school meetings trying to keep education fads out of his children's schools.

The genius of *Class Warfare* is that Rochester centers on the dysfunctional and mindless maxims that are at the heart of education today. The reader cannot assume his or her own school is unaffected, or that apparent problems are merely aberrations that can be solved by a quick fix after a discussion among reasonable adults.

"What is beyond question," writes Rochester, "is that, under the dumbing-down regime, most students are sinking."

Right from an early chapter on "What's Nutty About Contemporary K-12 Education," Rochester highlights the diminished focus on academics and the collapse of standards. Abetted by computers—used for *accessing* rather than acquiring knowledge—and radical egalitarianism, the result is the "self-indulgent, nonjudgmental classroom, where rigor and merit are now considered four-letter words, for fear of stifling personal creativity or favoring one student over another."

Rochester is particularly appalled by how the drive for "fairness" has cut the level of challenge for America's most able students.

"What's wrong with giving advanced work to students with the capacity and willingness to tackle it?" he asks.

Equity, not Academics

The emphasis on equity over academics invades even prestigious public schools like the well-funded New Trier High School in suburban

SANCTUARY continued on page 12



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~ Anne Brodbeck, Reviewer, Mary Pride's Home Life, Inc.

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About the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation

The Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization established in 1996 by Milton and Rose Friedman. The origins of the foundation lie in the Friedmans' longstanding concern about the serious deficiencies in America's elementary and secondary public schools. The best way to improve the quality of education, they believe, is to enable all parents to have a truly free choice of the schools that their children attend. The Friedman Foundation works to build upon this vision, clarify its meaning to the general public, and amplify the national call for true education reform through school choice. Contact us at www.friedmanfoundation.org for more information.

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An Educator's Journey

LAURA J. SWARTLEY

Dr. Alberta Wilson had become emotionally drained. Nearly every afternoon, distraught parents would come into her office, "crying and wringing their hands" because a lack of funds was forcing them to withdraw their children from the independent school she ran in her hometown of Philadelphia. The solution, the religious educator-turned-school principal decided, was to run for mayor of the city.

"I wanted to revamp the educational system in Philadelphia, facilitating school vouchers so parents could choose the schools like the one I had the privilege of being a part of," says Wilson.

But the idea of running for mayor was shelved when Wilson learned about Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit, a corporate tax credit scholarship program approved by legislators last year. Instead, she started an assistance organization to help parents from her school and other private schools take advantage of this new school choice option. Faith First Educational Assistance was incorporated in December 2002.

A devout Christian, Wilson feels she was led to this mission through the many difficulties of her life. She grew up in a tough area in the inner-city, and notes she has "a scar on my nose from a gang fight to prove it." At 22, she was a young, single mother, struggling to raise her six-year-old daughter. She had just completed her GED and had promising job prospects through the Navy Hospital of Philadelphia when her daughter was killed in a house fire.

Four years after her daughter's death, inspired by the leaders of the Mt. Erie Baptist Church in San Diego, California, Wilson entered seminary, ultimately earning her master's and doctorate degrees in religious education. By 1996, she was a professor of religious education at the Tabernacle Baptist Theological Seminary in Virginia Beach, Virginia. She returned to Philadelphia a year later.

"God led me back to my hometown of Philadelphia in 1997," she says. She helped to establish a day school for the children from the Beulah Baptist Church's preschool program so they would not be funneled into the city's troubled public schools, which would later (2002) be taken over by the state. The enrollment at the new school steadily increased from 14 kindergartners in 1997 to 92 children in grades K-6 today.

"We have a good Christian school. It is tops!" says Wilson, noting kindergartners read at first-grade level and beyond. The school's curriculum is "doctrinal," crafted around biblical principles, but it also is academically well-rounded, with science, drama, the arts, and physical education.



Dr. Alberta Wilson is president and founder of Faith First Educational Assistance Corporation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

A great number of the parents are single, explains Wilson. They want a better education for their children than they received, but many of them simply cannot afford to keep their children in the school.

"I am of the firm belief that parents are solely responsible for their children, and they are the ones who must, then, make a choice in education," she says. The primary mission of Faith First is to aid parents in making those choices.

Wilson is currently the administrative support person for the organization—as well as being Faith First's "grant writer, clerk, typist, solicitor, press secretary, parent educator, and more." She organized the first parent information meeting on December 17, 2002.

"The parents have volunteered to become 'parent leaders' so they may rally other parents for school choice," she reported. "It was a very successful meeting, the first of many."

Laura J. Swartley is communications director with the Milton and Rose Friedman Foundation in Indianapolis, Indiana. Her email address is laura@friedmanfoundation.org.

School Choice Roundup

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

ARKANSAS

Opponents Will Consider Voucher Bill

Even voucher opponents indicated they would consider a bill filed for the upcoming legislative session by Arkansas House member Jeremy Hutchinson (R-Little Rock) that would provide school vouchers for disabled children to attend the public or private school of their choice. Hutchinson, who filed the bill on January 2, told the Associated Press the measure would help parents enroll their children at two Little Rock schools that serve special needs children: The Arkansas School for the Blind and the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

Last year, together with Dean Elliott (R-Maumelle), Hutchinson introduced a bill that would allow students attending school districts classified by the state as in "academic distress" to receive taxpayer-funded vouchers for use in attending a private school or a public school in another district.

KARK-TV Channel 4 (NBC) KARK.com
January 2, 2002

LOUISIANA

Voucher Bills Expected in 2003

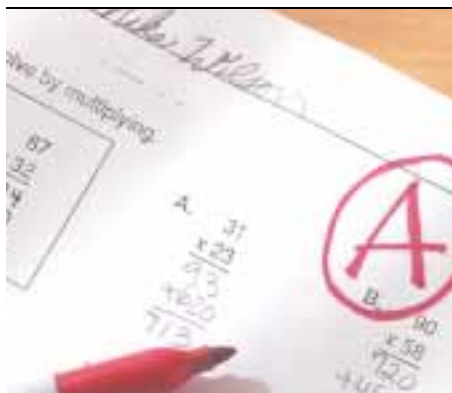
Observers in Louisiana point to four reasons why some form of school voucher program is likely to be enacted during the 2003 session of the Pelican State legislature:

- approval of the Cleveland voucher program by the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2002;
- the Louisiana legislature's approval last summer of a pilot pre-kindergarten voucher program, where parents may use the vouchers at private schools;
- a December poll of 625 Louisiana voters by Gannett Newspapers, which showed a 48:43 split in favor of publicly funded vouchers to pay for private schools; and
- results from the same poll, which showed voters consider education the #1 priority for Louisiana's next governor.

The Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans is drafting a bill that would allow voucher funds to be used for private school tuition. The bill is expected to focus on New Orleans, where 22 of the state's failing elementary schools are located.

Republican Governor Mike Foster supports vouchers as a tool to enhance parental choice but has insisted they also enhance accountability.

Monroe News Star
December 29, 2002



NEW YORK

Most Parents Don't Know Kids Are in Failing Schools

There are more than 300,000 children in the 331 New York City public schools the state has rated as low performers, but 85 percent of the parents whose children attend those schools don't know about their school's low rating, according to a survey of 1,200 people conducted late last year by the Foundation for Education Reform and Accountability. Although Foundation President Tom Carroll was "shocked" and surprised by that finding, parents weren't.

"The letters sent to parents about the status of their schools are filled with jargon," Bronx parent Denise Moncrief told the *New York Post*.

Once informed of the dismal school rating, though, 94 percent of parents said they would likely transfer their child to a better public school, and 97 percent said they would support free tutoring—two options made available under the No Child Left Behind law. But if they could afford it, more than 80 percent of parents would transfer their children out of the public schools altogether and put them in private or parochial schools. An overwhelming majority support using public funds—vouchers—for that transfer.

"I would take public funds to put [my children] in private schools in a minute," Bronx parent Jeanette Bocanegra told the *New York Post*. "Please call me when such funding is available."

But, based on comments from Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Bocanegra shouldn't wait by the phone. Bloomberg said he would consider using school vouchers only after he and his administration had made the public school system perform "dramatically better."

New York Post
December 18 and 20, 2002

\$7,000 Voucher Proposed to Ease Budget Gap

In the face of already high taxes and a \$6 billion budget gap, school vouchers could offer New York City a way to save hundreds of millions—even billions—of dollars, *New York Sun* editors suggested in a year-end editorial. They point out that when philanthropists offered 7,500 privately funded vouchers in 1999, nearly 170,000 students applied—the equivalent of 162,500 today. If those 162,500 students were given \$7,000 vouchers to attend private or parochial schools—about \$2,500 less than Gotham's average cost per student—the city would save \$406 million.

The cost per student in the city's Catholic K-8 schools averages \$3,200, with high schools costing about \$5,800 per pupil, according to the Archdiocese of New York. The *Sun* editors note the city would spend \$6.5 billion less on education if the public school system could educate each of its students for the same cost as the Archdiocese.

The Archdiocese has a total central staff of 28 to administer the system's 110,000 students. The city's public schools have ten times as many students—1.1 million—and more than 300 times as many administrative staff—almost 9,000.

New York Sun
December 31, 2002

OKLAHOMA

School Choice Could Ease Budget Woes

If private schools and home schools in Oklahoma already save state taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars each year, why not have them save taxpayers even more, since the state is experiencing a budget crunch? This was the suggestion laid out in December by Brandon Dutcher, research director of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs.

The parents of Oklahoma's 14,000-25,000 home schoolers and 31,276 private school students save taxpayers "a small fortune" in operating and capital costs, notes Dutcher. If all of these students—approximately 50,000—showed up at their local public schools tomorrow morning, asking for their free education, the state would have to find another \$300+ million a year to keep per-pupil spending at the current level of \$6,284. But that's not all: The cost of adding classrooms and schools for the extra students could easily top \$1 billion, since adding new public school seats costs \$15,000 to \$35,000 per seat.

"Just because the state provides for education doesn't mean it has to produce all of it," notes Dutcher. Using information from an OCPA study issued last year—"The Oklahoma Scholarship Tax Credit: Giving Parents Choices, Saving Taxpayers Money"—he suggests passing a modest tax credit would not only give parents more choices, but also reduce overcrowding and ease the state budget crunch.

Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs
December 2002

<http://www.ocpathink.org/economics/howschoolchoicecanease.html>

RHODE ISLAND

Pell Honored for Higher Education Vouchers

In the 2001-2002 school year, 16,478 students in Rhode Island received a total of \$32.5 million in federal Pell grants. At a December 11 ceremony at Newport's Salve Regina University, the man behind those grants, 84-year-old former U.S. Senator Claiborne Pell, was honored for his creation and for his support of higher education by an award from the Rhode Island Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

Pell grants are the most significant piece of education legislation in the nation's history, said Robert McKenna, chairman of the board of the Rhode Island Higher Education Assistance Authority. Pell grants, based on need and the cost of the school, are vouchers that students can apply to tuition at any college or university.

The Providence Journal
December 11, 2002

K-12 Vouchers Debated

At a day-long seminar to examine what works in educating at-risk populations, State Education Commissioner Peter McWalters suggested outcomes from public schools and private schools were not truly comparable, since private schools could pick and choose their students. With comparable populations, he said, "I will bet on the public schools every time." However, based on results presented from voucher experiments, McWalters' wager might not be a profitable one.

Speaker William Howell, a Harvard University professor and co-author of *The Education Gap: Vouchers and Urban Schools*, described voucher experiments in New York City, Washington, DC, and Dayton, Ohio, where the programs' design allowed direct comparison of student achievement gains at private versus public schools. African-American children at the private schools outscored their peers who remained in the public schools.

Valerie E. Lee, a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, suggested the solution was not to transfer students to private schools but to take what works in private schools and trans-

fer that to the public schools. Nevertheless, if she had a child in a troubled public school and were offered a voucher, she said she would take it "in a minute."

The event was hosted by RISE, Rhode Islanders Sponsoring Education, and the Star Kids Scholarship Program, organizations that help pay for at-risk children to attend private schools.

The Providence Journal
December 7, 2002

UTAH

Employers Back Tuition Tax Credits

While acknowledging a \$117 million shortfall in the 2003 state budget, a coalition of Utah employers in December called for an additional \$90 million in new money for education, declaring the state's public education system to be in "an impending crisis," as exemplified by not enough money, too many children, a coming enrollment boom, and concerns about the lack of skills of the system's current graduates. The employers group recommended several school choice options as a means of encouraging competition and improving quality:

- Expand charter schools;
- Ease the red tape for inter-school and inter-district transfers;
- Implement a refundable tuition tax credit that is less than the cost of education for a student in the public schools.

The Coalition started its examination of Utah's public education system last fall and issued a report in September that identified employer concerns with students' lack of basic writing and communication skills.

"The most surprising thing was the level of concern employers have about students coming out of high schools," said Fraser Bullock, chairman of the Employer's Education Coalition. "They don't have basic writing and communications skills that employers need. That's the most important thing."

According to coalition estimates, tuition tax credits would save the state money for every student that moved to a private school. With each additional student in the public school system costing between \$4,120 and \$5,000, the up to 100,000 new students expected over the next decade would generate funding requirements of almost \$500 million. But with a tax credit worth \$2,000 to \$3,000—less than the state's per pupil funding amount—the state would save money for every child that attended a private school.

While employers back the idea of tax credits, the Utah Education Association, the PTA, and the state schools superintendent oppose the idea.

The Salt Lake Tribune
September 26, 2002
December 14, 2002

WISCONSIN

Charter Numbers Catching Up to Vouchers

It took the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program 12 years to reach its current level of 11,600 students. By contrast, the city's charter school program has jumped from just 186 students four years ago to 11,497 in the current school year. One of the major components of that growth has been the conversion of several public schools in Milwaukee to charter status.

Four entities are authorized to approve charter schools in Milwaukee: the city itself; the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS); the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee; and the Milwaukee Area Technical College. MPS has approved about three-quarters of the city's 31 charters, while the Technical College has approved none.

Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel
December 30, 2002

SANCTUARY continued from page 1

Chicago. Rochester quotes parents from the district, one of whom moved elsewhere to "find refuge from the equity disease." The other, who stayed, said "it took twenty people spending 100 percent of their time to prevent the end of ability-grouping, but the administration was still chipping away at it."

A chapter is devoted to the religious-like fervor for "Multiple Intelligences," which, reports Rochester, has led to a "good deal of nonsense and a good number of abuses to be practiced in the classroom." From there, Rochester takes us the short step to the "therapeutic" suburban and middle-class classroom, awash with self-esteem, multiculturalism, time-consuming character education, and cooperative group projects, driven by administrators and "hired gun" consultants who thrive on anecdotes rather than research.

Mixed group projects come under severe criticism from Rochester for cheating both the achievers—who learn little themselves but become, in effect, unpaid teachers—and slower learners, who are deprived of the benefit of having an adult expert as a leader.

"[S]chools have taken the 'it takes a village' slogan to such excess that they risk producing a growing number of village idiots," he comments.

While educators claim business is demanding an emphasis on teamwork, Rochester finds the business community unimpressed by such efforts. For example, he cites a report from executives of 250 leading corporations who concluded school programs were "diluted, distracted, and diffused from the basic mission of education."

"[T]herapeutic' suburban and middle-class classroom[s] are awash with self-esteem, multiculturalism, time-consuming character education, and cooperative group projects, [and] driven by administrators and 'hired gun' consultants who thrive on anecdotes rather than research."

Betrayed and Bewildered

After revealing the faulty mindset of the education theorists, Rochester cuts to the core issue: the deleterious effect their "pack pedagogy" has had on the quality of instruction in math, reading, language, grammar, social studies, and other content subjects. Children are betrayed by the resulting fuzzy math, whole language, crippled standards, and assessments made so vague as to be meaningless. Parents are bewildered.

Concerned parents who join curriculum "committees" are shepherded into the pack mentality of the education theorists. When they meet with educators to develop recommendations, they are rarely presented with all sides of an issue and are

seldom informed of all relevant research. Parents who remain critical "end up being demonized as 'right-wingers' or troublemakers," notes Rochester.

Every superintendent Rochester encountered assured him that his or her district had not followed the "pack pedagogy," but Rochester shows the pack viewpoint prevails from one suburb to the next. The result is the "warfare" of the book's title, with parents fighting back against the deterioration of academics, with skirmishes over reading or math, charter schools, and campaigns for tougher standards.

The heart of the conflict is over what happens in classrooms. Education theory calls on teachers to be "coaches" rather than the experts and instruction leaders known to earlier generations. Teachers are instilled with the anti-intellectual bias that pervades the schools of education where they learn their trade.

Lectures are frowned upon, notes Rochester, as conferring an unmerited higher status on teachers vis-à-vis their students. But that's the point, he notes; the purpose of lectures is to convey the teacher's superior knowledge.

"If you have nothing worth saying, then you should probably not be lecturing; in fact, you

probably should not be paid to be at the front of the classroom or anywhere else in the room," Rochester argues.

The anti-intellectual bias that overwhelms education schools, Rochester says, is leading to a "Socratic method without Socrates." When parents object to the lack of content in their children's classes, they "are blasted for appearing disrespectful toward such dedicated professionals." Yet when assistant superintendents treat the same teachers as empty-headed children, telling them they "are behind the times and must change [toward progressive methods] for their own good, this is called 'professional development.'"

When Rochester takes a closer look at the schools of education, where teachers learn their profession, he finds the mother lode of bad ideas in education. Their "institutional vapidness" and "focus on process rather than content" left him wondering, "Where's the beef?" Indeed, Rochester suggests one reason education schools tend to attract lower-achieving students is the mindless coursework education majors must endure.

"To make the teaching profession respectable [and] to improve [K-12] education, get rid of the education major," suggested one college president.

Class Warfare may be the best source yet for a thoughtful parent or school board member who wants to understand the causes and vast extent of today's crisis in education.

Kevin Killion (kevin@illinoisloop.org) is a director of the Illinois Loop, an education reform group in Illinois. Its Web site is <http://www.illinoisloop.org>.

For more information...

WWW

J. Martin Rochester's *Class Warfare: Besieged Schools, Bewildered Parents, Betrayed Kids and the Attack on Excellence* is available for \$18.87 at Amazon.com. Point your Web browser to <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1893554538/theheartlandinst>.

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ALEC continued from page 1

enough to improve student performance."

As the report notes, citing U.S. Census Bureau data, improved student performance and the achievement of basic academic milestones make a dramatic difference over the course of a person's life. Without a high school diploma, the average person can expect to earn approximately \$1 million over a 40-year period; with a high school diploma, those earning expectations rise 20 percent, to \$1.2 million; and with at least a bachelor's degree, expected earnings reach nearly \$2.1 million.

"This only goes to reinforce what all parents clearly recognize—that their child's education is critical to their future success," write LeFevre and Hederman.

Inputs and Outputs

The *Report Card* includes historical information on educational resources, or "inputs," such as per-pupil expenditures, teaching staff salaries, student-to-teacher ratios, and a state-by-state breakdown of the amount of funds received from large federal education programs. The book also presents each state's academic quality indicators, or "outputs," using test results from the SAT, ACT, and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Acknowledging an increasing growth and interest in school choice, the book ranks states by the degree of educational freedom given to families by taking into account the availability of charter schools, subsidized private schools, home schooling, and public-school choice.

Spending and Student Achievement

In addition to providing useful state-by-state data, the authors include statistical analysis. They use several methods to examine the relationship between inputs and outputs in order to determine what policies produce the best results.

The report finds the inputs favored by teacher

For more information...

WWW The American Legislative Exchange Council's October 2002 *Report Card on American Education: A State-by-State Analysis, 1976-2001*, by Andrew T. LeFevre and Rea S. Hederman Jr., is available in hard copy (140 pages) for \$25 from ALEC at 202/466-3800 or online at http://www.alec.org/meSWFiles/pdf/Education_Report_card.pdf.

unions and others in the education establishment, such as increased funding and smaller class sizes, yield little in terms of increased outputs. "Of all the educational inputs measured in this study," the authors conclude, "only higher pupil-to-teacher ratios, fewer students per school, and a lower percentage of a state's total budget received from the federal government have a positive impact on educational achievement." The ALEC analysis effectively counters the notion that more federal money, more teachers, and sheer size make better schools.

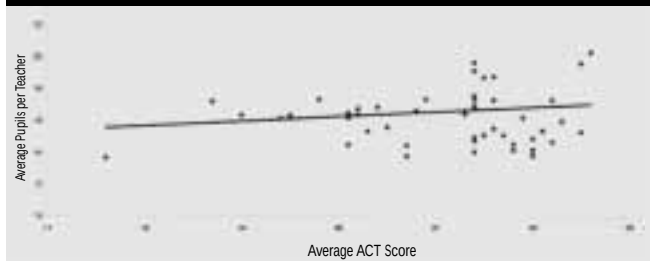
For several decades, national and statewide per-pupil expenditures have escalated while average class sizes have fallen significantly. Per-pupil expenditures have increased by 22.6 percent in constant dollars over the past 20 years. Nevertheless, results from the 2000 NAEP test show only 26 percent of American eighth-graders are proficient in math. Other achievement tests show similarly disappointing results.

"We cannot simply spend our way to better grades, but must make sure that we are making the right kinds of investments in our schools to promote high student achievement," noted Oklahoma State Senator Jim Dunlap, ALEC's 2002 National Chairman. "We must find and focus on new, best practices that will increase accountability, discipline, and standards for not only students, but for teachers as well."

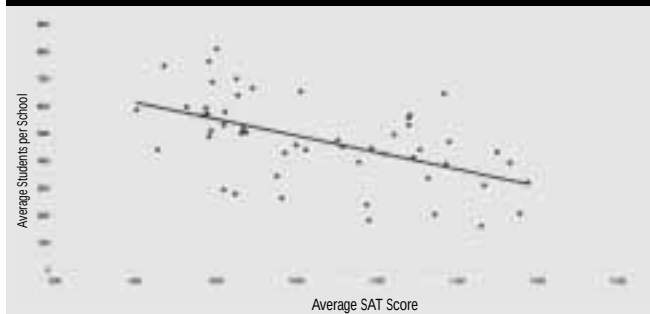
Faced with tight budgets, states cannot afford to fund education programs simply by adding to

Making class sizes larger and schools smaller are two reforms associated with improved student achievement.

ACT Scores and Pupils per Teacher



SAT Scores and Students per School



last year's appropriation. Instead, they must target funds toward policies proven to boost achievement. To do this and "to chart a course to success in the future," policymakers must gain "a clear understanding of what has or has not worked in the past," note LeFevre and Hederman. That is the aim of their book: to help "policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels understand what public education resources produce the best public education results."

The handbook will be a good resource for the members of ALEC, the nation's largest, bipartisan, voluntary organization of state legislators. It will also prove useful for other local, state, and federal policymakers as they tackle education reform in 2003.

Krista Kafer is senior policy analyst for education at The Heritage Foundation. Her email address is krista.kafer@heritage.org.

School Choice Initiatives Launched in the Old Dominion

ROBERT HOLLAND

Two members of the Virginia House of Delegates are proposing that the 2003 session of the legislature advance both vouchers and tax credits as ways to expand K-12 education choice in the Old Dominion.

At a General Assembly conference on school choice sponsored by the Lexington Institute, Delegate L. Scott Lingamfelter (R-Prince William) announced he was introducing an amendment to the state constitution that would bring Virginia in line with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision last June upholding under the federal Constitution the use of vouchers to promote "true private choice" in education.

The Lingamfelter amendment must pass two sessions of the General Assembly before going to Virginia voters for a final decision. Lingamfelter noted that even if the state constitution were amended, the General Assembly still would have to pass legislation to authorize and fund vouchers.

After the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Cleveland's

voucher program in the landmark *Zelman* case, the Institute for Justice reported Virginia was one of the so-called "Terrible Twelve" states that still impose rigid prohibitions—some of them dating to nineteenth century anti-Catholicism embodied

"Two members of the Virginia House of Delegates are proposing that the 2003 session of the legislature advance both vouchers and tax credits ..."

in the Blaine Amendments—against all aid that benefits religiously oriented schools.

"It is time," said Lingamfelter, "that we removed this arcane language and prepare ourselves to con-

sider programs similar to those that have been very successful in Cleveland. We should have the flexibility to consider the full range of school choice options. Right now we don't."

Lingamfelter noted it is likely a federal voucher program will eventually be enacted. "Depending on how such a program was constructed," he pointed out, "we might find ourselves unable to access matching funds if our constitution is not amended to give us needed flexibility."

Tax Credits Also on Agenda

Virginia would become the seventh state offering tax credits to advance school choice if the Assembly were to pass, and Democratic Governor Mark Warner to sign, a bill sponsored by Delegate Kirk Cox, a teacher in a Richmond-area public high school. Cox, a Republican from Colonial Heights, is proposing a corporate tax credit for donations to organizations awarding tutorial or tuition scholarships to needy students.

Priority would go to students from low-income homes who are in failing public schools, or who are classified as learning disabled, or who have failed one of more of the Virginia Standards of Learning tests. Scholarships could cover up to \$500 of tutorial services or \$5,000 of tuition annually at qualifying private schools.

Participating private schools would have to be accredited by the Virginia Council of Private Education. As an additional measure of accountability, the schools would be required to measure their scholarship students' annual progress in reading by means of a national norm-referenced achievement test.

Cox and the chairman of the department of economics at the College of William and Mary, Carlisle Moody, argued tax credits could save the state millions of dollars by relieving the government of the cost of educating children who chose to transfer to private schools and easing the need to build so many new public schools.

"Public schools have been moving toward choice themselves," said Cox, noting the rise of Governor's Schools, alternative schools, and specialty centers in his own school district. By extending the range of choice to include private schools as well, Cox said his colleagues in public education could accomplish such objectives as reducing class size and giving at-risk pupils in substandard schools greater educational opportunity.

Robert Holland is a senior fellow at the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, Virginia. His email address is rholl1176@yahoo.com.

"PTA parents in general are concerned about what's happening at their local schools, and the PTA leadership at the local schools deserves a great deal of praise: They do all of the work and raise all of the money that supports the state organization as well as the national organization. They get very little in return, except to see that their work is making a difference at their local schools."



Taking the Parent out of the National PTA

an interview with Charlene K. Haar
by George A. Clowes

When Charlene K. Haar made what she thought was a routine request to the National PTA, the reaction she received was so surprising it piqued the former public school teacher's curiosity to learn more about the century-old Parent-Teacher Association.

Instead of a parent organization dedicated to the enhancement of the nation's schools, Haar discovered a group dominated by teacher unions and little attuned to the interests of parents and their children. Her findings are detailed in the book, *The Politics of the PTA* (Transaction Publishers), published last fall.

Haar had been looking up information at the PTA headquarters in Chicago for a research project and asked for a copy of the PTA's nonprofit tax return, Form 990. She was told it would be sent to her, but what she also received was an accusatory letter from a PTA finance official, who suggested her intentions for asking questions and visiting the headquarters were suspicious, and that she was misrepresenting herself.

"If I hadn't received that letter, I would have completed my study of the PTA as a 10- or 12-page article for Capital Research Center, and that would have been it," said Haar. "But because I received this very curious letter, I decided there must be something they were hiding, that they didn't want their members to find out about, and that they didn't want to have publicized. That encouraged me to go ahead with a larger study that ended up in *The Politics of the PTA*."

Haar is an educational consultant specializing in teacher/parent relations and local, state, and federal education policy. She is president of the Washington, DC-based Education Policy Institute and also a research associate with the Social Philosophy and Policy Center at Ohio's Bowling Green State University. She is coauthor of *The NEA and AFT: Teacher Unions in Power and Politics*, and author or coauthor of numerous articles on PTA issues and on the teacher unions.

A native of South Dakota and a product of that state's public schools, Haar received a B.A. in French from the University of South Dakota and an M.A. in Gifted Education from Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. She taught French, English, and American Government for 11 years, most recently at Madison High School, Madison, South Dakota. An active participant in local and state politics in South Dakota, she was the state's 1992 Republican candidate for U.S. Senate. Haar recently spoke with *School Reform News* Managing Editor George Clowes.



Clowes: How did you become involved with education policy and education reform?

Haar: I was a high school teacher in Madison, South Dakota, and during that time I was in charge of developing the gifted student program. Since each student required an IEP, an Individual Education Plan, this gave me an opportunity to work very closely with the parents. I met individually with them and learned the concerns they had about education issues. From that, I learned more about parent involvement in school issues than I'd ever learned in my contact with parents in a regular classroom setting.

Then, in 1993, I had a career change. I had hoped to start a national organization for parents but instead I was invited to coauthor a book with Dr. Myron Lieberman and Dr. Leo Troy, called *The NEA and AFT: Teachers Unions in Power and Politics*, which came out in 1994. It was during this period that I did some research on the National PTA for the Capital Research Center and, as part of that study, requested a copy of the PTA's nonprofit tax return. In response, I received a letter that contained very curious and untrue allegations about my position and research.

At the time, I didn't know very much about the PTA. In our high school in South Dakota, there was no separate organization that included all the parents. They were split up into several groups, such as the band boosters, the supporters for the athlet-

ic programs, and the advocates for the debate program. In our elementary schools, too, the parent organizations were independent and not affiliated with the PTA.

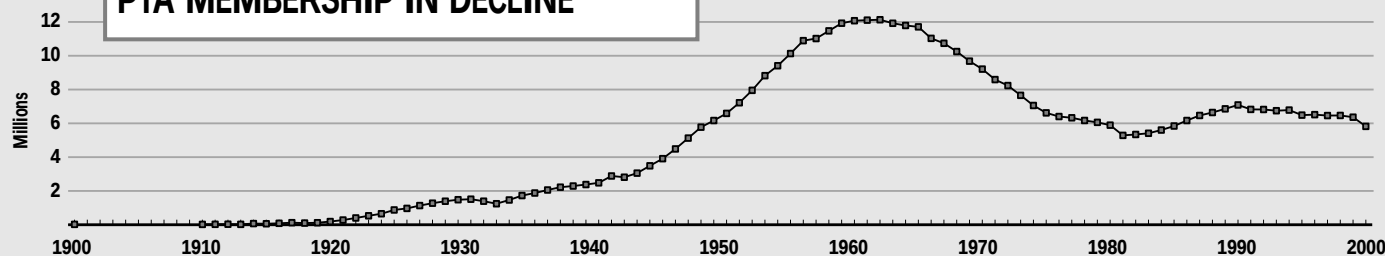
Clowes: So your idea of forming a national parent organization didn't grow out of a negative experience with the PTA?

Haar: Correct. It was because I was concerned the parents I was working with didn't have access to legislative programs, either at the state level or the federal level. When I was teaching, I regularly attended the school board meetings, and I listened to the problems the school board was having with federal and state mandates. Parents didn't have access to this kind of information. They also didn't have access to information about new studies in education. There were other big voids, big pockets of non-information or misinformation for parents. That was where I thought I could help parents.

Although I didn't start a national parent group, a Massachusetts entrepreneur named Tim Sullivan has developed PTO Today, an organization to bring independent parent-teacher organizations together to share what works.

Clowes: In your book, you describe how the National PTA has become more of a political organization and made it very difficult for parents to have any influence over PTA policies. Were you surprised to

PTA MEMBERSHIP IN DECLINE



find the PTA was more involved in politics than supporting parents?

HAAR: I most certainly was. In fact, I think one of the really important values of the book is that I document how those changes occurred in the PTA, often using the original PTA documents to make my case. Providing this kind of detail helps parents who are interested in dis-affiliating with the PTA because they often have a difficult time convincing others of the necessity for such action, without proof of PTA's positions.

The PTA has changed the process by which parents become involved in policy-making positions in the organization. This process now requires a tremendous commitment of time. This is a big negative for most parents, who are busy with full-time jobs and rearing children, and, consequently, it's mostly grandmothers who are in charge of the national organization. That presents another problem, because grandmothers are several years removed from the problems and attitudes that are present in schools today.

Because positions taken by the National PTA extend to the state and local PTA organizations, individuals who disagree with the positions taken at the national level are often criticized openly for merely questioning the PTA position. Candid discussions are discouraged, and criticisms and disagreements are not welcome in the PTA.

To minimize the impact of contentious issues, policy decisions are made by the National PTA board. After the National PTA promoted a controversial video (*It's Elementary*) that celebrates homosexuality in discussions with elementary students, including kindergartners, local PTA affiliates criticized the National PTA's promotion of the video. Rather than have an open discussion by convention delegates on this controversial issue, the PTA board expanded its position statement in 2001 to include respect for "sexual orientation."

Because very few parents are familiar with the positions of the National PTA, their dues often unwittingly pay for promotion of policies that are or would be opposed by parents who know about them.

There is very strong pressure, even at the national convention, not to challenge decisions or proposals made by the board. For instance, at the last PTA convention, the board allocated almost \$3 million of its very limited budget for its public relations campaign. Not a single representative at the convention asked what results had occurred from spending similar amounts for the two previous years.

PTA parents in general are concerned about what's happening at their local schools, and the PTA leadership at the local schools deserves a great deal of praise: They do all of the work and raise all of the money that supports the state organization as well as the national organization. They get very

little in return, except to see that their work is making a difference at their local schools.

CLOWES: Could you talk about the links between the PTA and the National Education Association?

HAAR: That development is really very interesting. We need to go back to 1920, when the PTA headquarters was actually in the NEA building in Washington, DC. At that time, there were very few teachers in the NEA because it was a professional organization run by school administrators. It was completely different from the union model they now have. But within the NEA in 1920 there was a department just for the PTA.

In the local school systems at that time—which numbered more than 100,000—the PTA acted like a Good Housekeeping seal of approval. Every superintendent wanted that seal of approval on his school and this encouraged the establishment of the PTAs. By the 1960s, the vast majority of schools in the country had PTA organizations.

"Because very few parents are familiar with the positions of the National PTA, their dues often unwittingly pay for promotion of policies that are or would be opposed by parents who know about them."

The 1960s was also when the NEA decided to transform itself into a teacher union like its rival, the American Federation of Teachers. It was a time of great turmoil in the school systems, with many, many strikes for various and sundry reasons, with parents unsure of whether to side with the school administrators or the teachers.

Although the PTA had moved out of the NEA headquarters in 1953, there was still a very close relationship between them. Many teachers were leaders in the PTA, just as they are today. The NEA let it be known that if PTAs continued to support the school board during teacher strikes, the NEA would pull its teachers out and start a competing organization. The PTA was afraid of losing members, and so, in 1968, the PTA Board of Directors—not the membership—set a policy declaring that, in teacher strikes, the PTA would not oppose the teachers and the teachers' union. This eliminated

parental support for the administration.

Up to that point in time, administrators had made the majority of the decisions in dealing with school functions. But when the teacher union came in, union contracts affected not only the terms and conditions of the teachers but also other school operations parents were interested in, such as teacher assignments. Parents still are interested in these other issues, but local PTAs can no longer provide any support to parents who wish to challenge union positions. In fact, a few years ago at the NEA convention, NEA President Keith Geiger reminded the PTA that its locals were bound by PTA policy not to challenge the teacher union positions in collective bargaining.

CLOWES: It's like the old Soviet Union "reminding" one of its satellites not to challenge Moscow's decisions.

HAAR: This analogy is a terrible thing, but it is a valid one. Furthermore, despite the PTA's claims that it represents all parents, it's absolutely not true. The PTA certainly doesn't represent parents on the issues that are of most concern to parents. For instance, if we just talk about the restrictions of the union contract, parents now are not able to meet with teachers before or after the school day unless the union contract requires teachers to participate in such meetings.

Another critical issue for parents is teacher assignments. But even the school administration doesn't control those assignments because the union contracts say transfers shall be based strictly on teacher seniority. The result is that some of the worst teachers get shuttled to the neediest schools. Even if PTA members want changes in the contracts, they are not allowed to take sides in collective bargaining. While you might think a parent organization would express its views on issues like these, local PTAs are not allowed to do so by National PTA policy.

CLOWES: The PTA doesn't appear to be supportive of parent interests with regard to school choice, either.

HAAR: That's right. The PTA came out strongly against a private school tax credit bill that was proposed in the U.S. Congress in 1977. They're very much opposed to vouchers and tax credits of any kind, and even private schooling itself. They're not keen on home schooling, either, and that is the ultimate in parental involvement. With charter schools, the PTA wants the same or more oversight as the regular public school system. In fact, they have adopted the same negative position about charter schools as the NEA.

The links between the NEA and the PTA are becoming more overt. For instance, at the last National PTA convention, the NEA hosted a reception for PTA delegates at which NEA President Bob

Chase promoted a book he had written for parents. On the back cover of the book was an endorsement from Shirley Igo, president of the PTA.

CLOWES: Another point you bring up in your book is the fact that the PTA does quite a bit of lobbying, even though it's a 501(c)3 organization.

HAAR: The PTA, even as a nonprofit organization, admits it takes positions on legislative issues. It does not endorse candidates for office, it does not have a PAC, but it does lobby. It has a 501(c)3(h) designation, which allows it to spend up to a certain percentage of its funds for lobbying. They have a lobbying office here in Washington, DC and anywhere between five and seven paid lobbyists.

One of the major differences between being a PTA and a PTO is that PTOs—the independent parent organizations—do not lobby. In fact, why should parents pay for lobbyists who don't represent their interests? When parents are paying dues to lobbyists who actually are working against some of the traditional values of parents in the PTA, then I think it's really deception. There are plenty of other organizations to represent political interests.

CLOWES: What suggestions do you have for parents?

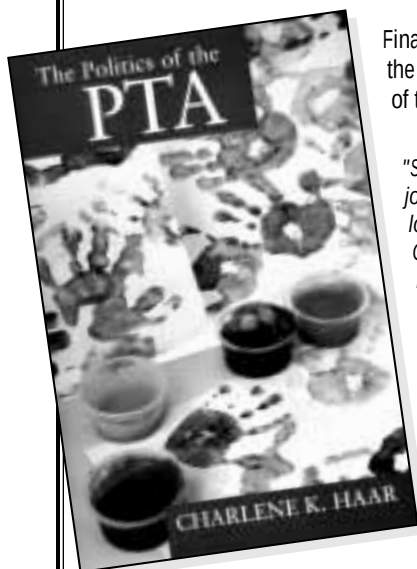
HAAR: This is what I tell parents who call me and email me: If, after you read *The Politics of the PTA* you still feel you're getting your money's worth from paying your dues to support your local, state, and National PTA organizations, then stay with them. But, if you don't, then you should make a change. You can do that by going to PTOToday.com and visiting with others who have started independent parent organizations at their schools.

If you're already a member of the PTA, and you don't believe what they're doing is in your best interest, then I suggest you disaffiliate from the PTA. There are ways to do that, and one of the best starting points is to read *The Politics of the PTA*, because I do have suggestions there. Another way is to go to our web site at www.educationpolicy.org, where I have placed general directions. Or, better yet, go to PTOToday.com and enjoy visiting with others who have disaffiliated from the PTA and started independent parent-teacher organizations.

CLOWES: Is the PTA losing members?

HAAR: Yes. The PTA had more than 12 million members in 1965, and there has been a steady drop almost every year since then, to just 6.2 million last year. With more than 53 million K-12 students in our schools, it's very clear the PTA's claim that it represents all students and all parents is a flagrant exaggeration. The fact that National PTA dues are only \$1.75 underscores what little appeal it has to most parents, especially minority parents.

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Finally, a book that documents the positions and inner workings of the PTA.

"Should parents think twice before joining an organization that walks in lockstep with the teacher unions? Certainly. Should parents do their homework before choosing to support the PTA's political agenda? Absolutely."

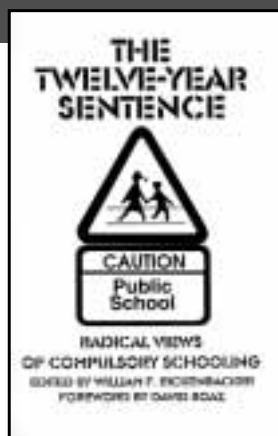
- Joyce A. Preest, editor
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Voucher and Tax Credit Programs

MARYA DEGROW

As new and returning state legislators reassemble in the nation's more than four-score "laboratories of democracy," many will be seeking ways to improve K-12 education and will want to know more about school choice options such as vouchers and tax credits. There now are 10 states to which they can turn for learning about the various forms such legislation can take—and use these as a basis for crafting legislation that would work best for their state.

Of the 10 states that currently offer some variety of educational tax credit, tax deduction, or voucher:

- Five provide some form of K-12 vouchers for a limited and designated segment of the population.
- Four allow individuals a tax credit for selected educational expenses incurred in the education of their children in grades K-12.
- Three allow individual or corporate tax credits for donations to public schools or to school tuition organizations (STOs). STOs may provide scholarships not only for private secular and religious school tuition but also for transportation to out-of-district public schools.

Minnesota is the only state that provides a tax deduction for K-12 educational expenses and tuition for all families residing in the state with students in grades K-12.

What Are School Vouchers?

School vouchers are publicly funded education scholarships or grants that may be applied toward full or partial payment of tuition or fees at the participating public or private K-12 school of the parents' choice. Vouchers are similar to the G.I. Bill and Pell Grants, which are scholarships funded by the government and

given to post-secondary students for use in the religious or nonreligious school of their choice.

What Are Tax Credits?

While tax deductions reduce the amount of taxable income before the tax liability is calculated, tax credits directly reduce the tax liability. Tax credits may be for individuals or for corporations; they may be applied to educational expenses or donations to educational entities; and they may be computed on a dollar-for-dollar basis or as a percentage of the amount involved. A nonrefundable tax credit permits refunds only up to the amount of the tax liability for the tax year. A refundable tax credit allows the taxpayer to receive a refund for the tax credit even if no taxes are owed or if the credit exceeds the tax liability.

For example, take a taxpayer who owes \$200 in taxes and has a tax credit worth \$250. A taxpayer living in a state with a nonrefundable tax credit would have the \$200 tax liability cancelled. However, a taxpayer living in a state with a refundable tax credit would have the \$200 tax liability cancelled and also receive a check for \$50 from the state. Some states allow unused credit to be carried forward to the next tax year.

A state-by-state summary of the voucher and tax credit programs currently available is provided on the opposite page. In reviewing each state's programs, it should be noted that their specific features are not necessarily end points to be cloned but rather starting points on which to build new programs with added or different features.

Marya DeGrow is the research assistant to the Independent Institute's Education Policy Center in Golden, Colorado. Her email address is marya@i2i.org.

College Vouchers Could Provide Model for K-12

Instead of paying more than \$460 million to Colorado's colleges and universities to provide a hidden subsidy for the tuition charged to the state's 200,000 students, a nine-member blue-ribbon panel appointed by Governor Bill Owens has proposed giving the money to students as college vouchers to reduce tuition directly. At present, no state distributes college funds in this way.

"We believe this concept would be a motivator for kids" to continue their learning after they leave high school, Colorado Commission on Higher Education spokesperson Joan Ringle told the *Denver Post*. Members of the blue-ribbon panel also said vouchers would stimulate more competition among colleges to meet students' needs. Another aim is to make college more accessible, especially for low-income students.

As a result of the panel's work, "vouchers" has become "an encouraging new buzzword" in education in Colorado, according to a December 2 editorial in the *Rocky Mountain News*. The editorial looked favorably on the voucher plan, which is under serious consideration as a solution to some problems and inequities created by implementation of the state's Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR). If vouchers do become a reality in higher education in Colorado, they are likely to serve as a persuasive model of how K-12 education funding could similarly be direct-

ed to students rather than institutions.

The panel has proposed a universal college voucher of about \$4,000 a year that would be given to all Colorado citizens who graduate from high school in the state. The voucher would be used to pay for tuition, up to a maximum of 140 credit

For more information...

see "Funding Higher Education in Illinois," *Heartland Policy Study* No. 60 by Cecil Bohanon. "Higher education in Illinois is facing difficult challenges," Bohanon wrote in 1993, "but a voucher system would empower university administrators and students to reform. Such market-based decision-making is far superior to fiat reforms." Point your Web browser to <http://www.heartland.org>, click on the PolicyBot icon, and search for documents #3646 and #3647.

hours, and obviously would make up a much larger percentage of tuition at a community college than at a state college or university. Currently, Colorado's community colleges are less affordable than those in other states, and Colorado ranks low nationally in the proportion of its high school students who pursue further education.

EDUCATIONAL VOUCHERS AND TAX CREDITS

A State-by-State Summary of Current Programs

MARYA DEGROW

SCHOOL VOUCHERS

Florida

Opportunity Scholarships go to families with children in schools that receive an F on the state report card for two years out of a four-year period, for use in any participating private school or another public school receiving a C or better. Scholarships are equal to the amount of the state's share of an eligible student's educational expenses, which in 2001-02 averaged \$3,500 to \$3,900. Participating private schools agree to receive up to the scholarship amount as full tuition. Participating students: 600 (Fall 2002).

McKay Scholarships offer students with disabilities the option to attend another public school or an eligible private school when the current school is not meeting the student's individual performance goals. In 2001-2002 the average amount awarded was \$5,547.

Participating students: 8,200 (Fall 2002).

Maine

Students residing in school districts without a public school may attend a public school in another school district or non-religious private school at a state and/or town expense of up to \$6,305. Public funds may be used for some nontuition educational expenses in religious schools.

Participating students: 14,185, with 5,933 in private schools (Fall 2001).

Ohio (Cleveland)

Students residing in the Cleveland Municipal School District in grades K-8 are eligible to receive scholarships to attend a qualified public, private secular, or religious school of their choice. Private school tuition cannot exceed \$2,500, with the state paying either 75 percent or 90 percent—i.e., up to \$2,250—depending on a family's income. Priority is given to low-income families.

Participating students: 4,523 (2001-02 school year).

Vermont

Students residing in school districts without a public school may attend a public school in another school district or approved nonreligious private school at school district expense (so-called "tuitioned students").

Participating students: 7,147 (2001-02 school year).

Wisconsin (Milwaukee)

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program provides the opportunity for up to 15 percent of students—approximately 15,000—in the Milwaukee school district to receive vouchers for use at private secular or religious schools if family income is at or below 175 percent of the poverty level. The value of the voucher, which was \$5,553 in 2001-2002, is equal to the Milwaukee per-pupil state aid or private school tuition, whichever is less. If more students apply at a particular school than there are open spots, students are selected by lottery.

Participating students: 10,789 (January 2002).

TAX CREDITS

FOR EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES

Arizona

A dollar-for-dollar tax credit of up to \$200 for the individual or \$250 for a married couple is allowed for fees paid to public schools for extracurricular activities or character education programs. The credit is nonrefundable, but may be carried forward for no more than five consecutive years.

Illinois

A nonrefundable tax credit is allowed for 25 percent of education-related expenses, including tuition, books, and lab fees that exceed \$250. The maximum amount of credit an individual can claim is \$500, for educational expenses in public, private secular, religious, or home schools.

Iowa

Iowa allows a tax credit of 25 percent of the first \$1,000 spent on each dependent's elementary or secondary educational expenses, including nonreligious tuition, textbooks, and/or extracurricular activities. The credit is available to families whose income does not exceed \$45,000.

Minnesota

Tax Credit: Families with income up to \$33,500 may receive a refundable tax credit of 75 percent of educational expenses, up to \$1,000 per student with a maximum of \$2,000. A reduced credit is available to families with income that exceeds \$33,500, but not more than \$37,500. Allowed expenses include tutoring and books and materials for nonreligious classes, but not tuition. Computer hardware and software expenses up to \$200 are also allowed. An education tax deduction also is available and may be used for expenses exceeding the credit.

Tax Deduction: A tax deduction is available for educational expenses of up to \$1,625 for students in grades K-6 and up to \$2,500 for students in grades 7-12. Expenses include private school tuition in Minnesota or surrounding states, tutoring, and textbooks and materials for non-religious classes. Computer hardware and software expenses of up to \$200 are also allowed. Taxpayers with students in grades K-12 in public, private, or home school qualify regardless of income.

FOR DONATIONS TO EDUCATIONAL ENTITIES

Arizona

For Private School Scholarships: A dollar-for-dollar tax credit of up to \$500 for an individual or \$625 for a married couple is allowed for donations to organizations that provide scholarships for students to attend private or religious schools. The credit is nonrefundable, but may be carried forward for no more than five consecutive years.

For Public School Programs: A dollar-for-dollar tax credit of up to \$200 for an individual or \$250 for a married couple is allowed for donations to a public school for support of extracurricular activities or character education programs. The credit is nonrefundable, but may be carried forward for no more than five consecutive years.

Florida

Dollar-for-dollar corporate tax credits are allowed for donations by corporations to nonprofit school tuition organizations (STOs). The credit may not exceed 75 percent of the company's tax due for the tax year and no one company may donate more than \$5 million to any one STO. There is a \$50 million cap on the total amount of tax credit the state awards within a fiscal year. Low-income students qualify to receive scholarships of up to \$3,500 to use for private school tuition, textbooks, and/or transportation. At least 75 percent of the scholarship for a private school must be used for tuition. Students who transfer to a public school outside of the district in which they reside may receive a scholarship of up to \$500.

Pennsylvania

Corporate tax credits are available for donations to STOs that provide scholarships to students who want to attend private schools. The credit is worth 75 percent of a single-year donation and 90 percent of a multi-year commitment. The credit is not to exceed \$100,000 for any one corporation and there is a cap of \$30 million credited throughout the state in a fiscal year. Scholarships go to families with incomes of no more than \$50,000, plus \$10,000 for each additional dependent.

For more information...

WWW

Marya DeGrow's Issue Backgrounder on this topic, which provides Web-linked references to each of the programs, is available from the Web site of the Independent Institute at <http://www.i2i.org/Publications/IB/Education/2002f.htm>.

Marya DeGrow is the Research Assistant to the Independent Institute's Education Policy Center in Golden, Colorado. Her email address is marya@i2i.org.

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JUST THE FACTS: Teacher Salaries

**"According to [the NEA],
the average public
school teacher salary
for school year 2001-02
was \$44,499."**

COMPILED BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

The nation's most prolific producer of education statistics is, not surprisingly, the U.S. Department of Education, whose National Center for Education Statistics collects and publishes a huge variety of education data on such matters as student enrollment, test scores, school staffing, and graduation rates.

Another not so surprising source of education statistics is the National Education Association, whose Research Department produces an annual

"Rankings & Estimates" report on school statistics, which is a much-quoted source of national and state-level data on teacher salaries.

Last November, NEA Research produced a Fall 2002 update to its "Rankings & Estimates" report for the school year 2001-02. According to this supplemental report, the average public school teacher salary for school year 2001-02 was \$44,499, up 2.7 percent from 2000-01. Public school enrollments were up 1.0 percent to 47,416,002, while the number of teachers rose

1.7 percent to 2,968,904. The student-teacher ratio fell from 16.1 in 2000-01 to 16.0 in 2001-02. Total expenditures on education, including capital and interest, rose 5.1 percent, to \$413.0 billion in 2001-02.

While NEA Research reports teacher salaries and other statistics in rank order by state, in the table below *School Reform News* places the data for a particular state in context by reporting it as a percentage of the national average. For example, California teachers are paid 121 percent of the national average, while South Dakota teachers are paid 70 percent of the national average. Similar reporting is provided for the student-teacher ratio and total expenditures per pupil.

To place teacher salaries in the context of total expenditures, each state's teacher salaries were multiplied by the number of teachers to produce state-level expenditures on teachers. When reported as a percentage of total expenditures,

For more information...

WWW The Fall 2002 Update of the National Education Association's "Rankings & Estimates" report is available online at <http://www.nea.org/edstats/reupdate02.html>. The previous full report is available at <http://www.nea.org/edstats/images/O2rankings.pdf>.

these figures show large variations by state. For example, almost half (47.6 percent) of all education spending in North Dakota goes to teacher salaries. By contrast, in the District of Columbia—where total expenditures per pupil top the nation at a remarkable \$15,371 per student—only one in five (21.8 percent) education dollars is spent on teacher salaries.

Public Schools 2001-02: Average Teacher Salaries and Student-Teacher Ratios

AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY	STUDENT- TEACHER RATIO	TOTAL EXPENDITURES PER PUPIL	STATE	As a % of U.S. Total Value			TOTAL EXPENDITURES	Teacher Salary Expenditures (#Teachers x Avg. Teacher Salary)		
				AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY	STUDENT- TEACHER RATIO	TOTAL EXPENDITURES PER PUPIL		DOLLARS	ASA % OF TOTAL EXPENDITURES	RANK
\$44,499	16.0	\$8,710	United States	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	\$413,011,822	\$132,113,259	32.0%	52
\$39,268	15.1	\$6,427	Alabama	88.2%	94.4%	73.8%	\$4,668,410	\$1,892,207	40.5%	4
\$49,418	16.9	\$10,212	Alaska	111.1%	105.6%	117.2%	\$1,372,014	\$393,318	28.7%	41
\$39,973	21.1	\$6,317	Arizona	89.8%	131.9%	72.5%	\$5,801,936	\$1,740,305	30.0%	34
\$37,140	14.6	\$6,835	Arkansas	83.5%	91.3%	78.5%	\$3,045,509	\$1,131,359	37.1%	7
\$53,870	20.8	\$7,966	California	121.1%	130.0%	91.4%	\$48,919,456	\$15,881,846	32.5%	21
\$40,222	17.1	\$8,258	Colorado	90.4%	106.9%	94.8%	\$6,128,348	\$1,740,889	28.4%	42
\$53,551	13.7	\$12,096	Connecticut	120.3%	85.6%	138.9%	\$6,889,417	\$2,233,184	32.4%	23
\$48,363	15.2	\$10,857	Delaware	108.7%	95.0%	124.6%	\$1,253,832	\$366,301	29.2%	39
\$39,275	18.2	\$8,031	Florida	88.3%	113.8%	92.2%	\$20,045,213	\$5,376,276	26.8%	48
\$44,073	15.8	\$8,799	Georgia	99.0%	98.8%	101.0%	\$12,939,689	\$4,091,341	31.6%	26
\$42,615	16.5	\$7,754	Hawaii	95.8%	103.1%	89.0%	\$1,430,944	\$477,118	33.3%	18
\$37,482	17.5	\$6,611	Idaho	84.2%	109.4%	75.9%	\$1,623,976	\$526,622	32.4%	22
\$50,000	15.9	\$10,588	Illinois	112.4%	99.4%	121.6%	\$21,904,494	\$6,522,650	29.8%	35
\$44,195	16.7	\$9,592	Indiana	99.3%	104.4%	110.1%	\$9,553,969	\$2,639,767	27.6%	47
\$38,230	14.0	\$7,714	Iowa	85.9%	87.5%	88.6%	\$3,748,641	\$1,326,352	35.4%	9
\$36,673	14.2	\$7,590	Kansas	82.4%	88.8%	87.1%	\$3,553,290	\$1,213,290	34.1%	17
\$37,847	16.5	\$7,630	Kentucky	85.1%	103.1%	87.6%	\$4,815,216	\$1,447,345	30.1%	33
\$34,505	14.6	\$7,236	Louisiana	77.5%	91.3%	83.1%	\$5,284,088	\$1,720,764	32.6%	20
\$37,300	12.9	\$9,822	Maine	83.8%	80.6%	112.8%	\$2,019,224	\$592,511	29.3%	37
\$46,200	16.1	\$9,059	Maryland	103.8%	100.6%	104.0%	\$7,822,495	\$2,472,301	31.6%	27
\$49,054	17.9	\$10,453	Massachusetts	110.2%	111.9%	120.0%	\$10,171,807	\$2,672,413	26.3%	49
\$52,037	17.2	\$8,701	Michigan	116.9%	107.5%	99.9%	\$15,093,488	\$5,254,800	34.8%	13
\$43,330	14.8	\$10,385	Minnesota	97.4%	92.5%	119.2%	\$8,908,783	\$2,518,946	28.3%	44
\$32,800	15.8	\$6,811	Mississippi	73.7%	98.8%	78.2%	\$3,352,323	\$1,023,524	30.5%	32
\$37,904	13.7	\$7,955	Missouri	85.2%	85.6%	91.3%	\$7,081,495	\$2,468,650	34.9%	12
\$34,379	14.6	\$7,567	Montana	77.3%	91.3%	86.9%	\$1,149,723	\$357,301	31.1%	31
\$36,236	13.7	\$7,608	Nebraska	81.4%	85.6%	87.3%	\$2,159,003	\$750,484	34.8%	15
\$44,738	19.0	\$8,305	Nevada	100.5%	118.8%	95.3%	\$2,963,292	\$840,403	28.4%	43
\$38,911	14.5	\$7,608	New Hampshire	87.4%	90.6%	87.3%	\$1,610,050	\$567,673	35.3%	10
\$51,186	13.0	\$11,326	New Jersey	115.0%	81.3%	130.0%	\$15,194,516	\$5,265,401	34.7%	16
\$36,440	15.2	\$7,487	New Mexico	81.9%	95.0%	86.0%	\$2,396,310	\$766,224	32.0%	25
\$53,081	13.6	\$12,511	New York	119.3%	85.0%	143.6%	\$35,531,000	\$11,054,384	31.1%	30
\$41,991	15.8	\$7,493	North Carolina	94.4%	98.8%	96.0%	\$9,902,914	\$3,523,339	35.6%	8
\$31,709	13.7	\$4,877	North Dakota	71.3%	85.6%	56.0%	\$540,993	\$257,540	47.6%	1
\$44,029	15.1	\$8,390	Ohio	98.9%	94.4%	96.3%	\$15,140,000	\$5,267,321	34.8%	14
\$34,744	15.0	\$6,647	Oklahoma	78.1%	93.8%	76.3%	\$4,135,407	\$1,443,961	34.9%	11
\$46,039	18.9	\$8,777	Oregon	103.5%	118.1%	100.8%	\$4,840,969	\$1,343,234	27.7%	46
\$50,599	15.4	\$8,493	Pennsylvania	113.7%	96.3%	97.5%	\$15,471,635	\$5,994,464	38.7%	6
\$49,758	12.2	\$9,825	Rhode Island	111.8%	76.3%	112.8%	\$1,551,915	\$644,615	41.5%	3
\$38,943	15.0	\$8,730	South Carolina	87.5%	93.8%	100.2%	\$5,846,425	\$1,736,975	29.7%	36
\$31,295	13.7	\$7,951	South Dakota	70.3%	85.6%	91.3%	\$998,803	\$287,288	28.8%	40
\$38,554	15.6	\$6,179	Tennessee	86.6%	97.5%	70.9%	\$5,609,252	\$2,238,407	39.9%	5
\$39,232	14.7	\$8,497	Texas	88.2%	91.9%	97.6%	\$35,235,253	\$11,086,532	31.5%	29
\$37,414	21.1	\$5,647	Utah	84.1%	131.9%	64.8%	\$2,698,188	\$849,148	31.5%	28
\$39,240	11.5	\$10,565	Vermont	88.2%	71.9%	121.3%	\$1,065,660	\$342,958	32.2%	24
\$41,262	12.7	\$7,216	Virginia	92.7%	79.4%	82.8%	\$8,357,025	\$3,770,315	45.1%	2
\$43,474	19.6	\$9,594	Washington	97.7%	122.5%	110.1%	\$9,863,383	\$2,284,820	23.2%	50
\$36,751	14.1	\$8,886	West Virginia	82.6%	88.1%	102.0%	\$2,507,882	\$734,505	29.3%	38
\$42,232	14.9	\$10,222	Wisconsin	94.9%	93.1%	117.3%	\$8,988,488	\$2,498,994	27.8%	45
\$37,841	13.0	\$8,813	Wyoming	85.0%	81.3%	101.2%	\$773,550	\$254,859	32.9%	19
\$47,049	14.0	\$15,371	Dist. of Columbia	105.7%	87.5%	176.5%	\$1,052,129	\$229,411	21.8%	51

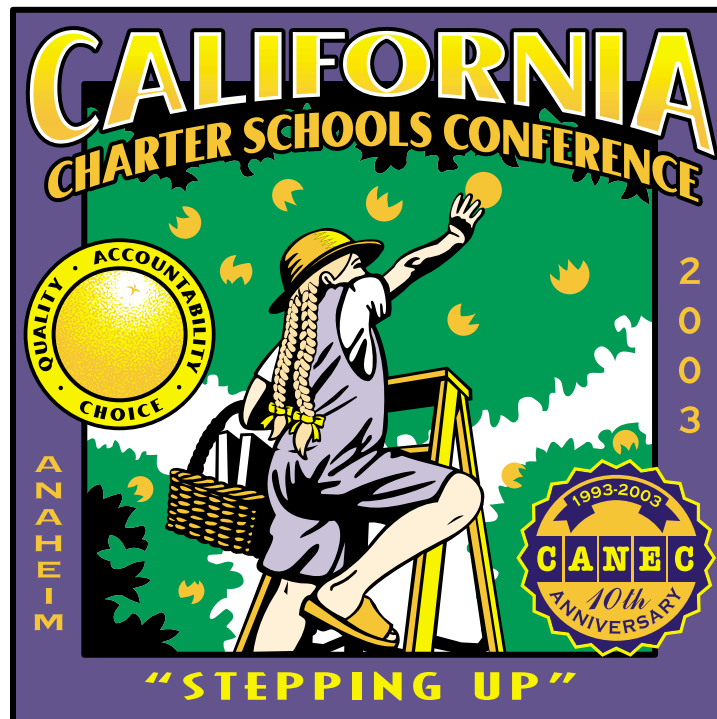
FOOTNOTES:

* Computed from NEA Research, Estimates databank. The figures are on reports through August 2002.

Source for raw data: National Education Association, "Rankings & Estimates" Fall 2002 Update published November 2002. <http://www.nea.org/edstats/reupdate02.html>

Join us for the
10th Annual California
Charter Schools Conference

March 27 - 29, 2003
Anaheim Marriott



You don't want to miss the **10th Annual California Charter Schools Conference**, the nation's largest and oldest statewide charter schools conference. Members of the state and national Charter School Community will come together to share ideas, consider future development plans, receive technical assistance and attain practical advice from others involved in the charter schools movement. We hope you join us for this exciting, annual event!

About the Conference Program:

The California Network of Educational Charters (CANEC) has organized a wide range of breakout sessions, general sessions and networking opportunities designed to meet the needs of a diverse group of participants. Regardless of the type of session, each is intended to provide participants with detailed and relevant information about specific issues. These sessions allow important topics to be addressed in depth and with participant interaction.

Early Registration Deadline: Friday, February 7, 2003
Registration Deadline: Friday, March 7, 2003 (late fee after this date!)
Hotel Reservation Deadline: Friday, March 7, 2003

For conference information, contact CANEC: 650 654-6003, 650 654-4267 (fax)
E-mail: conference@canec.org • Web site: www.canec.org
Conference registration also available on-line at www.canec.org.

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